UNITED NATIONS

# Daily Highlights

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## SUNDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* United Nations General Assembly begins special session commemorating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

* Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali urges world leaders to give the United Nations a firm financial base.

* General Assembly President says supporting the UN should be a collective pledge of the special session.

* President Clinton says the United States can be counted on to be in the United Nations for another 50 years and beyond.

* President Yeltsin calls for equality and tolerance among States.

* Cuban President Castro says the ill-use of the Security Council by some States is exhorting a new colonialism within the Organization.

* Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga has great hope in the United Nations for effective collective action to achieve socio-economic development.

* President Nujoma of Namibia says the UN is the only viable forum in which developing and small nations can raise their voices in equality.

* President Gonzalez of Spain, salutes achievements of the United Nations and reiterates commitment to principles and purposes of Charter.

* Prime Minister Bolger of New Zealand calls for new commitment to free the world from nuclear weapons.

* The history of United Nations is intertwined with question of Palestine, PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat tells assembled world leaders.

(more)

**For information media—not an official record**

* President Robinson of Ireland proposes steps to transform financial crisis facing United Nations and infuse it with new vigor.

* Mexican President Zedillo says for half a century United Nations has made decisive contribution to avoiding global conflagration and promoting peaceful settlement of disputes.

* Prime Minister Murayama of Japan advocates new development strategy combining policy measures in comprehensive manner.

* Prime Minister Chretien of Canada notes United Nations has struggled against racism and colonialism, disease and illiteracy.

* Draft declaration on 50th anniversary of the UN urges redirection of Organization to greater service to humankind.

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Nearly one hundred and fifty Heads of State and Government have gathered at United Nations Headquarters for the Special Session of the General Assembly commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The session began with praise for the Organizations's past accomplishments and calls for its democratization and reform. The three-day session runs until Tuesday night.

Thirty-eight Heads of State or Government were among the speakers who took the floor during the morning and afternoon meetings on the first day of the special commemorative session.

At a special luncheon in honour of the assembled Heads of State and Government attending the special session, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said fifty years of experience proved that the United Nations was the essential world organization of the future. The record of the United Nations showed that it could foresee problems; it could forecast solutions; it could not always be successful, but it would be essential, of that there could be no doubt.

President William J. Clinton, speaking on behalf of the host country said the United States still treasured the opportunity to host the United Nations. He hoped that the next fifty years would be an even richer, more profoundly successful endeavour because of what had been learned by working together in the last half-century.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has called on world leaders to give the United Nations a firm financial base. In his opening statement to the special commemorative session, the Secretary-General urged that if steps towards this end could not be set in motion by the end of the year, serious consideration should be given to calling a special session to deal with the financial crisis of the Organization.

The United Nations, the Secretary-General said, could help solve the problems created by the dialectic of globalization and fragmentation because it was designed to respond to both global concerns and the needs of Member States. It had dealt for 50 years with those two forces.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the commemorative session was a time for the leaders of the world to consider what it was they wanted from the United Nations.

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General Assembly President Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral said supporting the United Nations should be the collective pledge of this Special Session. He said reforming the United Nations should be the political commitment during the three days. The Organization could not be allowed to die at the hands of its critics, nor to perish for the lack of commitment of its supporters.

Please tell the world that freedom, justice, development and human solidarity are magnificent values worth living and working for, the Assembly President said.

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United States President William J. Clinton, taking the floor as the first speaker, said while the United Nations had not ended war, it had made it less likely to occur. He told the gathered world leaders that the United Nations had helped many nations to turn from war to peace. The United Nations, he added, had not stopped human suffering, but it had healed the wounds and lengthened the lives of millions of human beings.

The United Nations had not been all that it was wished it would be, but it had been a force for good and a bulwark against evil, Mr. Clinton said. At the dawn of a new century so full of promise, yet plagued by peril, the United Nations was still needed. President Clinton concluded that while the United Nations had not banished repression or poverty from the earth, it had advanced the cause of freedom and prosperity on every continent.

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President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation warned that there was a dangerous tendency to downplay the role of the United Nations, to circumvent its Charter and the collective will of the Security Council. He said the world more than ever needed not only equality and tolerance, but respect for the identity of each State.

Mr. Yeltsin said the United Nations could and should become the main instrument for building new international relations. It had all the necessary powers to do so. President Yeltsin said to carry out this mission, it should be provided with appropriate means including financial resources. Russia met and would continue to meet its obligations to the United Nations.

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Cuban President Fidel Castro questioned the privilege of the veto enjoyed by some members of the Security Council. He said the ill-use of the Security Council by the powerful, was exalting a new colonialism within the Organization. Latin America and Africa did not have one single permanent member in the Security Council. President Castro said in Asia, India had a population of almost 1 billion, but it did not enjoy that responsibility.

President Castro said, "We lay claim to a world of peace, justice and dignity where everyone, without exception, has the right to well-being and life."

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The President of Sri Lanka said her country had great hope in the United Nations for effective collective action to achieve its central aim of socio-economic development, thereby ensuring social stability and peace for its people. However, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said the new agenda of the United Nations with its heavy emphasis on peacekeeping operations had impacted adversely on the development process.

As a developing country, Sri Lanka attached great importance to the role which the United Nations could, and must perform in advancing the development process. The effective strengthening of the United Nations system was an essential requisite for advancing its goals. The Organization had regrettably, she said, sometimes come to be seen by the more vulnerable States as primarily serving the interests of the more powerful States.

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Namibian President Sam Nujoma said while the United Nations was far from perfect, it was the only truly viable forum in which developing and small nations could raise their voices on the basis of equality. He said the

organization stood at the centre of multilateral diplomacy and cooperation and therefore, should be the starting point. He called on the international community to rededicate itself to the unfinished business of the United Nations.

Mr. Nujoma said during the next 50 years and beyond, the United Nations should stress interdependence, equity and fair play among nations and peoples in order to remove the ever-widening gap between the rich North and poor South. Mr. Nujoma said the future belonged to the youth and children. The collective duty must be to reinforce their vision for a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous future in the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation.

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President Felipe Gonzalez of Spain, speaking as President of the European Council saluted the achievements of the United Nations and reiterated commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter. He said the universality of the United Nations reinforced its role as a centre for harmonizing the efforts to advance in this path.

The Spanish President said today's world could not be conceived without considering the contribution of the United Nations to the process of decolonization, to environment and development issues, and to the consecration of innovative concepts such as the common heritage of mankind.

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The Prime Minister of New Zealand, James Bolger called for a new commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. He said several States had abandoned their nuclear capability while others are making significant reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

Mr. Bolger said against that background, New Zealand found it inexplicable and unacceptable that two states were still testing nuclear weapons. Continued nuclear explosions sent all the wrong signals. What was needed, he said, was a strategy to achieve the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. It was not an impossible goal.

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The history of the United Nations was intertwined with the question of Palestine, the Chairman of the of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberations Organization (PLO) told the assembled world leaders. The history and resolutions of the Organization constituted a permanent, legal, political and moral responsibility, he added.

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Speaking at the Sunday afternoon session, President Mary Robinson of Ireland proposed a number of steps to transform the financial crisis facing the United Nations and infuse it with new vigor.

She told the General Assembly the first must be finance, to save the UN from grinding to a halt due to lack of it. The Security Council should examine, clarify and codify its procedures for undertaking and running peacekeeping operations and enforcement action.

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Mexican President Dr. Ernesto Zedillo said it recognized that for half a century the United Nations had made a decisive contribution to avoiding a global conflagration and to promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes. President Zedillo said serious problems persisted which were at the root of conflicts that gave rise to confrontations in the past.

Also for that reason, the President of Mexico said the United Nations must be strengthened as the principal universal forum for dialogue and peace, for security and cooperation among peoples, and for ensuring that the relations among States were governed by international law. The United Nations must be the forum for achieving a world free from the nuclear threat.

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Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of Japan advocated a new development strategy that focused on combining various policy measures in a comprehensive manner. The Japanese Prime Minister told the Assembly that his country also stood ready to play an even more expanded role in the concept of sustainable development, the promotion of democracy and economic reform and extending a broad range of economic cooperation to meet global challenges.

Japan also stood ready to cooperate more actively for peace in such areas as humanitarian assistance, preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping operations, and arms control and disarmament with regard to nuclear weapons as well as conventional weapons, such as anti-personnel landmines and small arms. It was time, he said that efforts toward the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons were accelerated.

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The Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chretien noted that the United Nations had struggled against racism and colonialism, disease and illiteracy. But, he added, its work was far from finished. He said while there was much more to

do, the United Nations itself was under attack, through the current financial crisis caused by too many States not paying their dues on time and in full.

But finances were only a symptom of a deeper crisis, the Canadian Prime Minister said. There was a growing belief that nations could not work together effectively on issues of common concern. Some argued that global approaches were too complex. Others said the UN was too expensive -- and not worth the cost. These arguments betrayed a lack of confidence in the future. And Canada would have none of it. Today, even more than 50 years ago, was truly one world. More than ever, the United Nations was needed. It was needed to maintain international stability and order. It was needed to tackle problems that did not respect borders - aids, drugs, terrorism.

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A six-part draft declaration urging a redirection of the United Nations to greater service to humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived, has been approved by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations fiftieth anniversary. The draft is to be submitted to world leaders now gathered here at the United Nations headquarters, for adoption on Tuesday 24 October -- exactly 50 years after the Charter of the Organization entered into force.

The text focusses on peace, development, equality, justice and the United Nations Organization. By its provisions, member states and observers would reaffirm the purposes and principles of the Charter and pledge to give to the 21st century, a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively, the peoples in whose name it was established.

An entire section of the draft is devoted to the United Nations Organization. It states that in order to respond to future challenges, the United Nations must be reformed and modernized. The Security Council should be expanded and its working methods reviewed to strengthen, and enhance its representative character and improve working efficiency and transparency.

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